

The President's Daily Brief

14 August 1973



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Although intercepted Khmer insurgent messages call for simultaneous attacks in the Phnom Penh area on the night of August 14, a major offensive against the capital is probably beyond present insurgent capabilities. (Page 1)

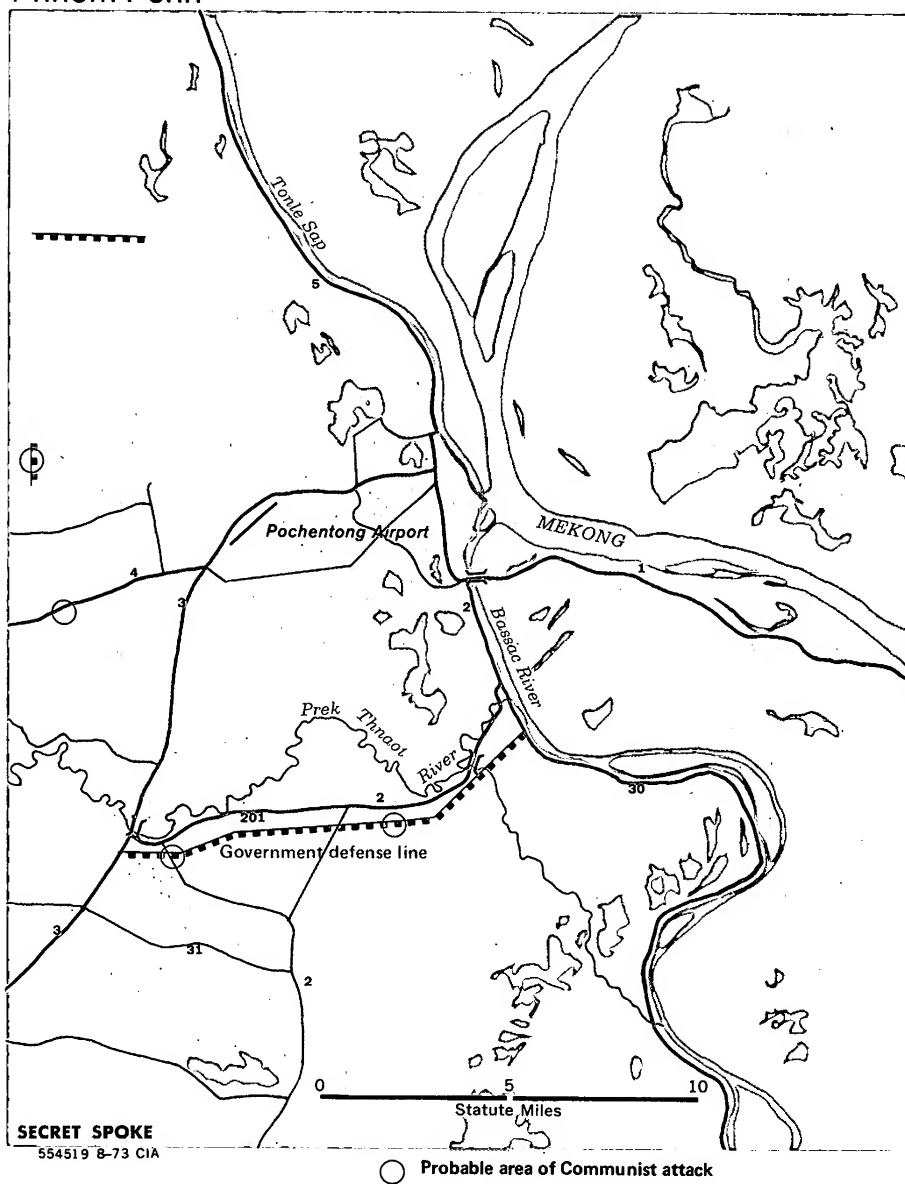
In Chile, the chief effect of the military's return to the cabinet last week is to buy President Allende time. (Page 2)

Some progress has been made in talks between the Syrian and Lebanese foreign ministers on reopening the border between their two countries, and the matter has now been referred to higher levels. (Page 3)

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh may show enough flexibility on the key issue of war crimes trials to permit further progress in the negotiations scheduled to resume in New Delhi on August 18. (Page 4)

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Phnom Penh



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CAMBODIA

Khmer insurgent units on Phnom Penh's southern front have been instructed "to attack swiftly and strongly" during the night of August 14 and to enter Phnom Penh "if the situation favors it." An intercepted message of August 13 also calls for simultaneous attacks on the capital's northern defenses. Other messages of August 12 and 13 mention plans for attacks on several fronts immediately following the bombing halt.

The Khmer insurgents probably will attempt widespread shellings and small-scale ground assaults to exploit the psychological impact of the bombing halt, but it is doubtful that they will make an all-out effort to capture the city within the next few days. Insurgent units withdrew from the southern front last week for rest and re-fitting, and fighting on the northern front and along Route 1 has slackened significantly. Many of these insurgent units are short of supplies and have taken heavy casualties from air strikes. A major offensive against Phnom Penh on such short notice is probably beyond their present capabilities.

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CHILE

The chief effect of the military's return to the cabinet last week is to buy President Allende time. Although some coup plotting continues, chances for success of any actual attempt have been further reduced. Even among those officers who disapproved of military re-entry into the cabinet, the general reaction has been to support the four service commanders who assumed portfolios.

The military, however, lacks the authority to restore order and get the transportation system working. Although military commanders have been appointed for each province, they have not been given emergency powers. The under secretary of transportation, a radical Socialist, has in fact sabotaged military efforts to end the truck strike.

Discord continues within the opposition Christian Democratic Party (PDC). Party President Aylwin has announced that the PDC favors the continuation of the truckers' strike in defiance of the government, but there are indications that other elements in the party are ready to explore some compromise with Allende.

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SYRIA-LEBANON

Some progress has been made in the talks between the Syrian and Lebanese foreign ministers on reopening the border between their two countries, and the matter has now been referred to higher levels.

Syria closed the border in May to bring economic pressure to bear on the Lebanese Government, which was then embroiled in a fight with the fedayeen. Damascus hoped then to achieve better terms for the guerrillas, force Lebanese policies into closer alignment with Syria's, and keep the fedayeen on the other side of the border. In the present talks, Syria apparently is trying to get Lebanon to crack down on its political opponents living there.

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BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman may show enough flexibility on the key issue of war crimes trials to permit further headway in the negotiations set to resume in New Delhi on August 18.

Last month, India and Pakistan agreed to a formula under which Bengalees in Pakistan and Pakistani prisoners of war in India would be repatriated immediately. Excluded would be 195 Pakistanis charged with war crimes and 203 Bengalees accused of treason whose fate would be decided later. If Mujib agrees to this formula, Pakistan says it will end its opposition to Bangladesh's admission to the UN.

Mujib probably will not compromise on the principle of holding trials eventually. But the government is having trouble preparing cases and is not yet in a position to obtain convictions. Moreover, Mujib wants to appear in a good light at the nonaligned conference in Algiers next month; he also knows early trials would preclude UN membership this fall.

Mujib will gauge public opinion carefully before making a decision. Both his deep personal convictions and public actions by his government--such as the passage of legislation authorizing the trials--limit his ability to maneuver.

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